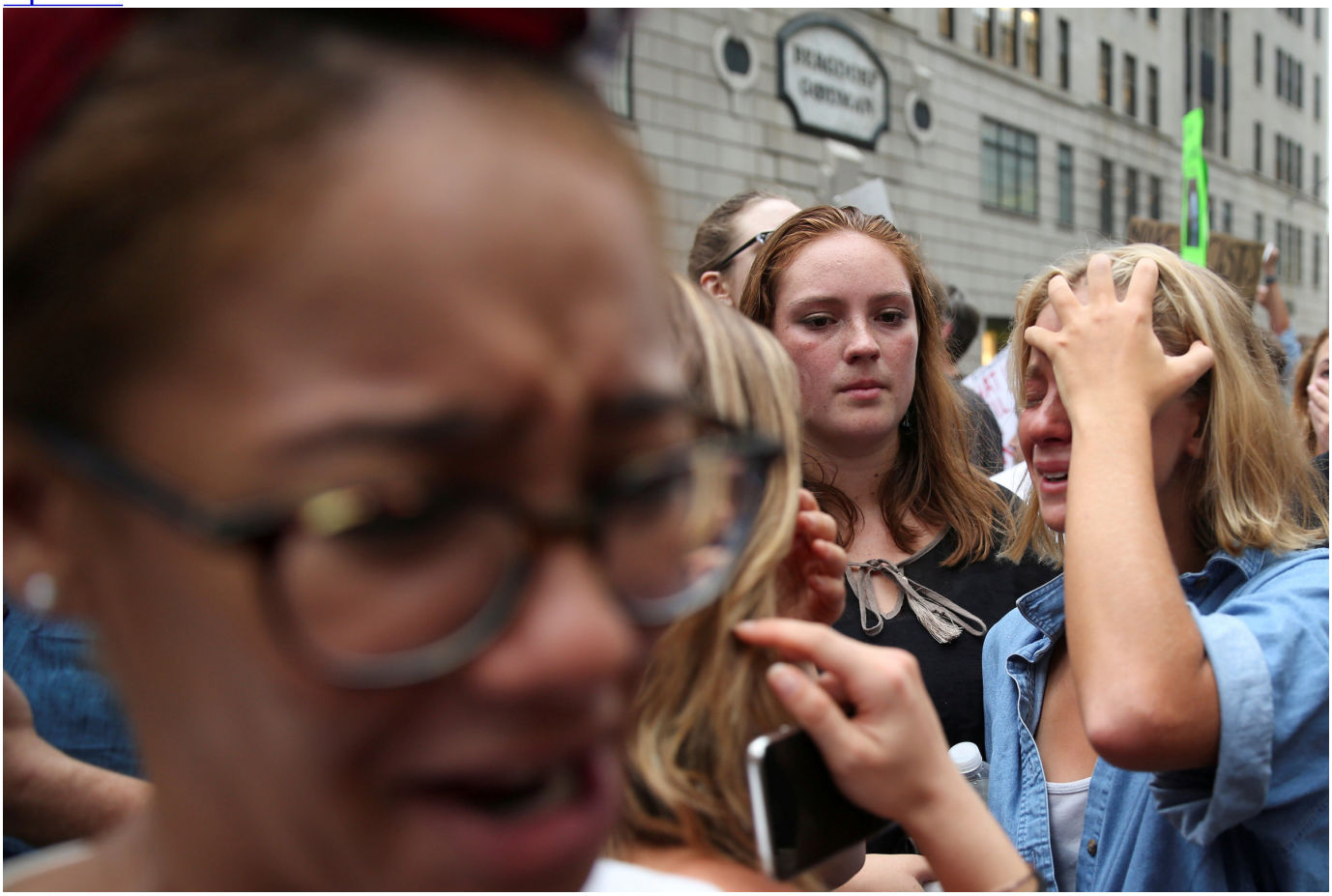
Opinion



President Donald Trump protesters weep outside Trump Tower during a demonstration in New York City Aug. 14. (CNS/Amr Alfiky, Reuters)



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My brother Vito graduated from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, in 1962. He loved the university and the Charlottesville community. Several years later, following medical school and military service, he wanted only to return to Charlottesville to live. He was able to make that happen, and enjoyed every aspect of living there from Cavalier basketball games, to treating the children of the community as a pediatrician.

If my brother were alive today he would be profoundly disturbed that the violence of Saturday, Aug. 12, could happen in his beloved Charlottesville. His family, including his son Tom, a recent candidate for governor in the state, were actively part of those who protested against hate and violence.

The notion that the president of the United States could equate such counterprotesters with the Ku Klux Klan, is beyond belief.

The presence, in the White House, of officials who support the ideology of these hate groups tarnishes the administration and our country.

So now, President Trump has condemned the white nationalist groups, even though his condemnation comes two days late. Is that delayed response enough? It is not enough, but it is necessary. For the leader of the free world to have been silent in the face of such bold actions by what have always been fringe groups is intolerable. He needs to go further, and eliminate those in his administration who support such ideologies.

There will always be those who espouse extremist views in our country. They have always been around and can never be completely rooted out. However, they have no place at the center of power in our government.

There is a real danger that such protests and demonstrations will become commonplace and result in more violence. All responsible leaders must speak out again and again to make clear that these groups do not represent the core values of our country. Many members of the president's own political party strongly condemned these hate groups by name.

This kind of hate and inciting of violence represent a failure to understand the history of the United States, what our country stands for, and the continuing struggle

of the U.S. to ensure equality for all. We need our president to lead the charge against hate. Trump has not been reticent in attacking those he disagrees with. He has attacked Muslims, Sen. John McCain, immigrants, Attorney General Jeff Sessions, and many others. Yet he has trouble publicly disavowing white supremacists.

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Time will tell whether this country stands against these new threats to our unity and diversity. Those characteristics that have represented our strength are under attack. We fought a Civil War because we understood the evils of slavery. Later, we were determined, as Martin Luther King once said, to rise up as a nation and "live out the true meaning of its creed." Black and white citizens marched during the '60s to demand equality and an end to the evil of segregation.

President Donald Trump has given no indication that he is part of that tradition of guaranteeing and furthering the rights of all of our citizens, be they black, Jewish, Muslim, immigrant, gay, etc. We have arrived at crunch time. We have a president who may not serve out his full four-year term. What will his legacy be?

However long his presidency lasts this is his opportunity to do something good. Let him show that he believes in this country that has been so good to him and his family. Let him stand up for human rights and make clear that he will not tolerate the kind of ideology in evidence in Charlottesville on Saturday. The opportunity and the need is there. Let's see if he can respond to it.